

This Garden at This Hour, 2014

Matthew Ritchie

Aluminum, steel, polyester, composite stone and plants

Project Summary

Throughout history and across cultures, gardens have been used to represent the universe in microcosm. Following in this tradition, Matthew Ritchie created *This Garden at This Hour*, a sprawling artwork comprising both sculpture and landscape elements that evoke the complex and important mission of the FDA. Described by Ritchie as “a molecular garden,” the artwork’s interlocking metal arbors, planters, benches and hexagonal stone pavers are patterned after the structure of carbon, the elemental foundation of life. Treating the roof surface as an enormous canvas and working with GSA horticulturalist Darren DeStefano, Ritchie carefully selected the artwork’s plantings for their visual and sculptural qualities, historical uses and culturally symbolic meanings (often represented by their traditional names, listed inside) to represent an evolutionary timeline moving from the deepest areas in the south, with some of the oldest plant types in the deepest soil, to the north where the shallow depth limits choices to survival species that can thrive in four inches of soil. All three plant adaptation strategies are represented: the “competitor,” maximizing resource acquisition, the “stress tolerator,” thriving through metabolic performance in unproductive niches, and the “ruderal” or genetic propagator, which survives through rapid completion of its lifecycle in disturbed areas. Ritchie’s intention is for the plantings to migrate and change naturally as they vie for resources, producing a “wild garden,” and ever-changing landscape of evolutionary competition at work, exploiting every part of the ecological triangle.



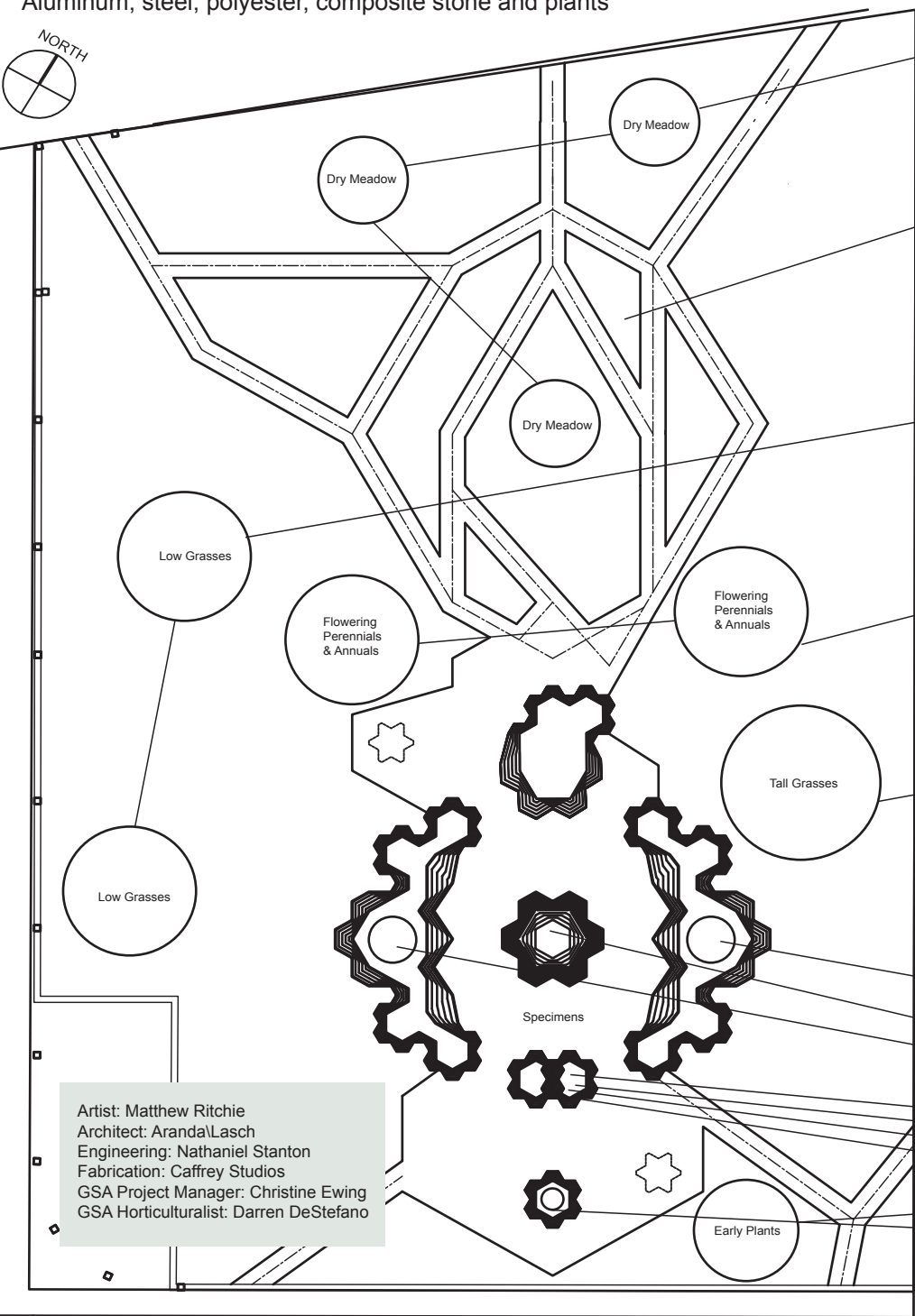
Ritchie is well known for his elaborate, multimedia projects that variously combine drawing, painting, sculpture, sound and video to explore the relationships among many fields of inquiry, such as history, religion, science and literature. With each new project, Ritchie shifts the focus of his artwork’s content to address its specific context. For example, with *This Garden at This Hour*, Ritchie traces the parallels between archetypal creation stories and the vital work of the FDA, balancing nature and culture. The artwork’s title is an allusion to John Milton’s 17th-century epic poem *Paradise Lost* (book 9, lines 205-06, “...we labor still to dress this Garden...”), the structure and themes of which Ritchie connects to the idea of biological growth at different levels and scales. Ritchie has described his work as an attempt to “create a landscape where different kinds of information can coexist...to convey my personal sense of how incredibly rich and complicated the world is.”

For more information, visit our GSA website: www.gsa.gov/whiteoakcampus

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Artist: Matthew Ritchie
 Architect: Aranda\Lasch
 Engineering: Nathaniel Stanton
 Fabrication: Caffrey Studios
 GSA Project Manager: Christine Ewing
 GSA Horticulturalist: Darren DeStefano

Location/Type

Dry Meadows

Coral Carpet
 Cobweb Houseleek
 Cholla
 Dunce Cap
 Wormwood
 Blue & White Sedum

Latin name

Sedum album
 Sempervivum arachnoideum
 Cyllindropuntia
 Orostachys boehmeri
 Artemisia annua
 Sedum reflexum and spurium

Low Gardens

Wormwood
 Silver Wormwood
 Moon Carrot
 Yarrow
 Standing Cypress
 Dwarf Blazing Star
 Lady's Leek
 Russian Sage

Artemisia arborescens 'Powie Castle'
 Artemisia ludoviciana
 Seseli gummiferum
 Achillea millefolia
 Ipomopsis rubra
 Liatris microcephala
 Allium cernuum
 Perovskia 'Filigran'

Low Grasses

Blue Moor Grass
 Little Blue Stem
 Prairie Dropseed
 Love Grass
 Purple Moor Grass
 Wavy Hair Grass

Sesleria autumnalis
 Schizachyrium scoparium 'Blue Heaven'
 Sprobolis heterolopsis
 Eragrostis spectabilis
 Molinia litoralis 'Windspiel'
 Deschampsia flexuosa

Flowering Plants

Licorice Mint
 Giant Hyssop
 Bloodflower
 Iron Butterfly
 Blazing Star
 Sea Thrift
 Rattlesnake Master
 Sea Holly

Agastache rupestris
 Agastache 'Black Adder'
 Asclepias tuberosa
 Vernonia lettermanii
 Liatris spicata alba
 Eryngium planum 'Blue Glitter'
 Eryngium yuccifolium
 Eryngium agavifolium

Tall Grasses

Switchgrass
 Shenandoah Switchgrass
 Throughwort

Panicum virgatum 'North Wind'
 Panicum virgatum 'Shenandoah'
 Eupatorium hyssopifolia

Specimens

Black Elderberry
 Bugleweed
 Smoke Tree
 White Wisteria
 Flying Dragon
 Cotton Lavender
 Sea Thrift
 Staghorn Sumac
 Lead Plant

Sambucus nigra
 Ajuga reptans 'Chocolate chip'
 Cotinus coggygia 'Grace'
 Wisteria floribunda 'Alba'
 Poncirus trifoliata 'Flying Dragon'
 Santolina chamaecyparissus
 Eryngium planum 'Blue Hobbit'
 Rhus typhina
 Amorpha canescens

Pines

Coral Pine
 Mugo Pine
 Black Pine
 Ephedra Sinica

Ch. obtusa. 'Coralliformis'
 Pinus mugo 'Winter Gold'
 Pinus thunbergii 'Ichiyo'
 Ephedra sinica

Early Plants

Monkey Puzzle
 Horsetail Ferns
 Ginkgo
 Katsura
 Taxodium

Araucaria araucana
 Equisetum hyemale robusta
 Ginkgo biloba
 Cercidiphyllum japonicum 'Pendula'
 Taxodium distichum 'Peve Minaret'